

Margaret Dore

News and commentary about
assisted suicide and euthanasia



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The Brittany Maynard Case Illustrates Problems With Legal Assisted Suicide.

By Margaret Dore, Esq., MBA

Brittany Maynard is a beautiful young woman with a brain tumor. For the last two weeks, her story has been promoted by the former Hemlock Society, now known as Compassion & Choices, in an aggressive multi-media campaign.

1. There is a Risk of Suicide Contagion.

It is well known that media reporting of suicide can encourage other suicides, for example, a "copycat suicide" or a "suicide contagion." A famous example is Marilyn Monroe. Her widely reported suicide was followed by a increase in other suicides.

This encouragement phenomenon can also occur when the inspiring death is not a suicide. An example is the televised hanging of Saddam Hussein, which led to suicide deaths of children worldwide. An NBC News article begins:

The boys' deaths - scattered in the United States, in Yemen, in Turkey and elsewhere in seemingly isolated horror - had one thing in common: They hanged themselves after watching televised images of Saddam Husseins' execution.

http://www.nbcnews.com/id/16624940/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/copycat-hangings-follow-saddam-execution/#.VDr5AfIdWSo

Groups such as the National Institute of Health and the World Health Organization have developed guidelines for reporting suicide. Important points include that the risk of additional suicides increases "when the story explicitly describes the suicide method, uses dramatic/graphic headlines or images, and repeated/extensive coverage." <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention/recommendations-for-reporting-on-suicide.shtml> See also: http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/resource_media.pdf

The media campaign by the suicide advocacy group, Compassion & Choices, to promote the death of Ms. Maynard, by "aid in dying," a euphemism for legal assisted suicide in Oregon, violates all of these guidelines. We are told of the planned method, when and where it will take place and who will be there. There is repeated extensive coverage in multiple media.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Margaret Dore is President of [Choice is an Illusion](http://www.choiceillusion.org), a nonprofit 501(c)(4) human rights organization opposed to assisted suicide and euthanasia. She is also an attorney in Washington State where assisted suicide is legal. See www.margaretdore.com and www.choiceillusion.org

MARGARET DORE DEBATES ASSISTED SUICIDE.



"A right to medically assisted suicide may sound compassionate and just, but beware the details when it comes to the act itself, a U.S. lawyer warned." Click on the photo to read the article.

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With this situation, the risk of suicide contagion associated with Compassion & Choices' media campaign is real. The persons at risk include children.

2. Family Members who Witness an Assisted Suicide Can be Traumatized.

According to media reports, Ms. Maynard's plan is to have her family present when she goes, and that with this situation, she hopes to spare them emotional pain.[1] If so, she may want to reconsider her plan. A Swiss study of family members and friends who witnessed legal assisted-suicides in Switzerland found that 20% had "severe mental health problems at 14 to 24 months post-loss."

Here's a link to an article about the study:

<http://choiceisanillusion.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/family-members-traumatized-eur-psych-2012.pdf> Here's the conclusion:

[T]he findings suggest that witnessing death by assisted-suicide impacts the mental health of family members and friends. About 20% of our respondents had full or partial PTSD and 16% had symptoms of depression after about 19 months after the death. Witnessing the unnatural death of a significant person thus seems to have a strong impact on the bereaved, which may lead to severe mental health problems at 14 to 24 months post-loss. *Id.*

3. Legal Assisted Suicide Encourages People with Years to Live, to Throw Away Their Lives.

In Oregon, assisted suicide is legal for persons with a "terminal disease," which is defined in terms of a prediction of less than six months to live.[2]

According to media reports, Ms. Maynard has a brain tumor, which is end stage and death is "certain." On the other hand, doctors can be wrong. Consider this article from Washington State, describing the case of Maryanne Clayton:

She . . . had Stage IV lung cancer, the most advanced form there is. Her tumor had metastasized up her spine. . . . The doctor gave [her] two to four months to live. . . .

That was almost four years ago.[3]

Legal assisted suicide encourages people with years to live, to throw away their lives.

4. Assisting Persons, including Institutions and Organizations, can have their own Agendas.

The recent Melchert-Dinkel case shows a reality that people tend to forget, that with legal or illegal assisted suicide, the assisting person can have an agenda. For Melchert-Dinkel, his agenda was to get other people to hang themselves in front of his webcam. He told police that he did it for the "thrill of the chase" See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/suicideobsessed-us-nurse-convicted-of-helping->



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LABELS

- assisted suicide
- Barbara Coombs Lee
- Baxter
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- elder abuse
- Jeanette Hall
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Meanwhile, in Oregon, that state's Medicaid program has a well-documented agenda to steer patients to suicide via coverage incentives. See

<https://maasdocuments.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/bradley-c-c-missoulain-as-published.pdf> Similarly, the former Hemlock Society, Compassion & Choices, has an agenda for a public policy change, to reduce patient access to cures. *Id.*

Compassion & Choices also has an agenda to ensure that its assisted suicides succeed. They are nearly always present during Oregon assisted suicides. They also encourage family members to be present, which as noted above, is reportedly contemplated by Ms. Maynard. With this situation, the event is similar to a wedding, in which everyone is there and watching. There can be social pressure to go forward.

* * *

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[1] See https://choiceisanillusion.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/29-year-old-woman_-why-im-taking-my-own-life.pdf (regarding Ms. Maynard's intention to have her family present, with one of her goals being "to put myself through less physical and emotional pain and my family as well"). (Emphasis added).

[2] ORS 127.800 s.1.01(12).

[3] Nina Shapiro, "Terminal Uncertainty," Washington's new "Death with Dignity" law allows doctors to help people commit suicide - once they've determined that the patient has only six months to live. But what if they're wrong? The Seattle Weekly, January 14, 2009. For un-formatted online version, go here: <http://www.seattleweekly.com/2009-01-14/news/terminal-uncertainty> For pdf, go here: <https://choiceisanillusion.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/terminal-uncertainty.pdf>

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